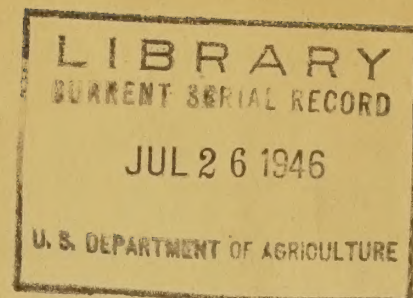


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Information Division
950 Broadway
Denver, Colorado



Revised
April 1, 1946

PUBLIC RELATIONS OUTLINE

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- . This revised public relations outline combines .
 - . all phases, including radio and county news- .
 - . letters, into one kit for the convenience of .
 - . FSA employees. It supersedes previous issues, .
 - . including the Public Relations Outline issued .
 - . March 22, 1943; the Supplemental Public Relations .
 - . Outline issued March 1, 1945; the Newsletter .
 - . Outline of Nov. 20, 1942, and the Supplemental .
 - . Newsletter Outline of Nov. 1, 1943. .
-

Although this outline is prepared primarily to assist county RR and HM supervisors in furthering a better community understanding of what FSA is accomplishing, its content should prove useful to other field personnel as well as to state and regional office employees.

These are busy times for everyone and frequently there is a tendency for people working in a program such as ours to do just about everything except a good public relations job. The result is that, while the program may be well advanced, the public is not aware of it and not being fully informed may listen to adverse criticism and lessen its support. In time this tends to make more difficult successful operation of any such activity.

It is fundamental that the public should know what we are doing. The FSA has a splendid program and is doing an excellent job. Certainly the taxpayers are entitled to know about it.

This is the time to let people know about FSA's achievements, the value of its families to the community and the strengthening of the family-type farm through FSA's efforts. We should also emphasize that ours is not a relief program, that loans made by FSA are repaid.

Too often we overlook the fact that any good program needs public understanding and support, and that people should know what we are doing.

* * * * *

JUN 20 1946

GENERAL

In the final analysis, most of the public relations responsibility rests with county supervisors. It is the responsibility of the Information Division and of regional, state and district personnel to provide the tools, leadership and direction to enable supervisors to do their best, but the supervisor is the spear-head. He is the person who must tell the story in the communities.

To do this, the supervisor should utilize fully the various information materials and devices available. There are county newsletters, radio, Leader Letters, tours and farm visits, news releases, luncheons and individual and small group contacts, to mention a few. We suggest the supervisor will want to analyze his situation and then tailor the materials and aids to fit the community need.

Fundamental principles of a good public relations program are simple. Here they are:

1. The success of any endeavor can be measured by the extent of public understanding. Unless the public does know what FSA is doing, there cannot be much support.
2. A program such as ours, which is highly significant and has many noteworthy achievements, by all means should be fully explained in every community. It is rare indeed that a person who knows what FSA is doing fails to support the program.
3. Aside from the fact that the public, the taxpayers, are entitled to know what this or any other agency is all about, it is a fact that a full community understanding means more support and cooperation for the county supervisor and makes his job easier.
4. If community leaders, including county committeemen, can tell others about what FSA can do for small farmers, including the veteran, then FSA's services will reach more people. Performance will be more effective.

* * * * *

TOOLS FOR DOING THE JOB

To render an effective performance in public relations, the county supervisor must have the facts about his local program as well as information on a state, regional and national basis. In addition to loan and repayment figures, he should have complete information about veteran activities, growth of FSA families in his area, and outstanding accomplishments such as FO, WF and group services. Insofar as possible,

he should see that county committeemen have similar information.

Here are some methods that can be used:

1. In his daily contacts the supervisor can chat for a few minutes with editors, bankers, teachers, business and professional men, representatives of other agencies, etc., about FSA.
2. County newsletters can be used to keep farm families informed about FSA's program, services and accomplishments.
3. Leader Letters (explained in separate outline) can be very effective.
4. Supervisors can prepare and issue short news releases several times a year, dealing with availability of funds, loans and collections, veteran activity, annual FO meetings, tours, etc.
5. Tours and farm visits are effective. End of the war will bring renewal of farm tours and supervisors can encourage small groups or clubs to participate. It is also good to take one or two interested persons on an occasional farm visit.
6. Work with civic clubs and similar organizations and arrange to speak at one of their meetings, or if you prefer have a county committeeman do the job. Most clubs in small towns and cities are definitely interested in the welfare of the people in agriculture. Contact program chairmen of some of your civic clubs and see what can be developed. Also give attention to the "Family-type Farmer" dinner suggested a year ago. Quite a few clubs would be interested in devoting a program to honoring family-type farmers in the county.
7. Interviews with veterans are not only helpful to the veteran but can do much to broaden public understanding of FSA. Take plenty of time and explain the programs to veterans and all other farmers inquiring at the county office.
8. Branch out this year and contact two or more groups or organizations that you have not worked with previously. For example, a PTA group, a women's club or a ministerial alliance.
9. Use radio when possible. Usually supervisors can arrange to do an occasional program with a county agent or with the farm editor of a local station.

These are a few suggestions. There are others and perhaps supervisors can develop some of their own. In any event, we should keep foremost the thought that an informed public opinion is desired.

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COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

County FSA people in particular are busy, but most of them can plan their work so as to devote a little time to telling the story. For example, if the supervisor has to go to the courthouse on business he can take a few minutes to contact the county superintendent and ask to be put on the program for the next teachers' institute.

Many civic clubs and the Chamber of Commerce are looking for speakers with an interesting story and you can arrange to fill a date for them. Do keep this in mind: the club does not expect you to be an orator. All you have to do is "talk shop", tell them about FSA and answer a few questions. Never attempt to read a prepared talk.

The community field is big. It includes teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, civic clubs, city and county officials, club women, labor and church groups and young people's organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, 4-H and Future Farmers.

To get it down to earth we offer ten possibilities. Why not ask yourself how long it has been since you made any of these contacts:

1. School teachers and pupils. There are individual teachers who are interested in our program, they also have group meetings, institutes, conventions. A talk by a FSA representative would be acceptable. Pupils often need material for themes or talks. Encourage them to come to you for information.
2. Courthouse and city hall officials. You should know your city clerk, the judge, the mayor, and if in a county seat you should know all of your courthouse people. If they know what you are doing, they'll tell others.
3. Ministers. Many cities and towns have a ministerial alliance or similar group. Try and arrange to speak to them at the next meeting. In Catholic communities the priest is aware of our program as a rule. Get acquainted with him and get his help.
4. Labor groups. Organized labor has supported FSA strongly. You should know your local labor people. If there is no organization, talk to a few of the working folks who are leaders.

5. Club women. Many women's clubs are interested in social and economic problems and when they get interested they work at it. You are overlooking a good bet if you do not get your message to them.
6. Professional people. You should know your doctors, lawyers and dentists. And they should know about FSA. They see lots of people in the course of a year.
7. Civic clubs and Chambers of Commerce. By all means you should get a bid to talk to your local businessmen and tell them about an agency that means so much to their community.
8. Other USDA people. Know and work with other government representatives.
9. FSA committeemen, USDA county councils, etc. Perhaps you have neglected your committeemen lately. If so, this is the time to do something about it. And your county council is a highly important contact.
10. Young people. This is a most effective medium. Young folks are interested in what is going on. Not only your Future Farmers and 4-H members but your Hi-Y, Christian Endeavor and other clubs. By all means develop contacts with these young people. You can give them material and background for discussion and study activities.

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NEWSPAPERS

County supervisors should know their local editors. Be sure to drop in and get acquainted with the editors you have not met. You will find these men are interested in community developments and in agencies which contribute to the welfare of the people. Make certain that they know what FSA is doing.

Newspaper space is valuable and you should not expect your editors to print long, loosely written stories. When you write something, get in all the facts, names, dates, places, etc., but make the story short.

In any writing you do, be sure to confine the story to the facts. Do not discuss controversial matters, politics or programs other than those of FSA. "Fill-in releases" or re-prints of news stories carried in frequent issues of TEN TOPICS" will serve as a guide in preparing your stories.

If you have both daily and weekly newspapers you should endeavor to send or distribute your stories so that all can have them at the same time. Most weekly papers go to press on Thursday, so don't give your daily editor a story Monday and expect the weeklies to use it four or

five days later. Sometimes your news will be "spot" and will have to be printed right now, in which case it will not always be available for the weeklies. But do familiarize yourself with this situation and do your best.

You can mail a story to editors if (1) they have asked for it, or (2) you send a covering letter.

A good, interesting news story will usually be printed. So if you can tell your editor about FSA production increases or repayments or machinery pooling or other developments of interest to the community he will be glad to use the story.

Please remember that a good story is not necessarily a long one or an "important" one. Short, interesting unusual farm stories are always acceptable to editors. If some of your families make progress by novel or ingenious means, try and get out a story about it.

* * * * *

RADIO

County offices in towns served by radio stations ought to make full use of any opportunities. In the past, some supervisors have worked up their own programs while others have made use of existing farm shows conducted by the Extension Service.

Radio offers an opportunity to inform rural and city people about agricultural programs such as FSA affords. If near a station, supervisors should contact the farm editor or the program director and ascertain the possibilities of some FSA programs. If the county agent has a regular program, see him and try and arrange for some cooperative activities.

There isn't anything mysterious or complex about radio farm broadcasting. The copy or script should be lively and interesting. A dull, technical discussion will not help the station or the agency participating.

Supervisors are invited to write to the Information Division regarding sample scripts, scripts used in previous IF broadcasts or further information on radio farm programs.

* * * * *

LOCAL NEWS STORIES

County supervisors are expected to develop and place local news stories with editors. This can be done in connection with program developments from time to time, and can also involve progress stories and other types of material. There are occasions such as important meetings, when editors should be informed in advance and provided with the necessary facts. Many supervisors give their editors annual "roundup"

stories pertaining to FSA activities in the county for the past year. The annual FO meetings fall in the same category and provide an opportunity for placing a good story.

There are other instances requiring special treatment. They involve, for example, the story of a paid-up FO loan, the construction of a water facility which will increase the productive capacity of a farm, an unusual case of heavy food production by a family, etc. Most editors are glad to receive stories like the above provided you keep them short and include all the facts.

In dealing with newspapers, you should keep in mind the same policy which prevails in handling material for the Information Division: be sure to include all names, ages, dates, information on size of farm, production and "how it was done". Where sons or daughters in a family were in service include the facts about their records.

When releasing stories to local papers, be sure to include all papers and make the release to all simultaneously. Permission must be obtained from the family before we use any story.

It is good policy to visit an editor now and then and talk shop with him. Let him know who you are, what you are doing, how the program is operating in the community. He will appreciate any "tips" you can give him about non-FSA developments, too. If some farmer gets a new barn, a new bull or if his son is home on furlough the editor will appreciate your telling him.

Close cooperation with editors in the county will enhance the value of the FSA program and will contribute to an informed public opinion.

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MATERIAL FOR IF

An important part of the work of a county office is to provide the Information Division with case histories, stories, features and short items involving various program phases. Such material is essential to enable IF to maintain its work with major newspapers, telegraphic wire services and radio stations, and also to provide the national office with needed material.

A wealth of splendid story material is available in each county. The job is to get it into useable form and to prepare only the best and most interesting material.

In preparing story material, some county supervisors have difficulty on two scores. First, they are not always certain whether or not the story is of interest, and second, they are inclined to omit pertinent detail. This is understandable because supervisors are familiar with farm families and their progress and they do not always realize that many

people do not have this outlook and so a development which may seem common-place to a supervisor is really of considerable interest to newspaper readers. And since supervisors are not writers, they sometimes leave out facts needed to round out a story. The case history check list will help here.

The matter of selecting material is up to the supervisor. But perhaps it will be helpful if he will keep in mind that there is interest about family progress and that in FSA we have lots of good stories which are striking and unusual in presenting progress.

Good news stories may concern an individual member of a family, such as a 4-H member who has made unusual progress; a family working as a whole; a group of families cooperating to share labor and machinery, or all FSA families in one county. An example of the latter occurred in Colorado last year when an enterprising supervisor developed a story with figures showing that the 23 FO families in his county produced and sold enough food in 1943 to feed 936 soldiers for one year. In the region during the past few years excellent stories have been prepared on honey and bees wax production, how FSA families produced more to solve local shortages of milk, how poultry and egg production was increased in war-time, etc. You will find these examples in the Digest of Region X News Stories and your state "Highlights". The examples may help you in working up local stories.

These suggestions can help produce better stories:

1. Refer to the case history check list and be sure all names, facts and figures are included in the narrative.
2. Be sure to explain how the FSA loan helped the family.
3. Include facts on sons or daughters in service.
4. Include comparative figures on food and fiber production.
5. Watch for the unusual or interesting angle.

* * * * *

USE OF MATERIALS

Proper use of information material can do much to inform farm families and the public about FSA. Information endeavors to keep county offices supplied with current pamphlets and circulars. If you do not receive items you'd like to have, write in and tell us.

Offices should maintain an adequate supply of the mimeographed circulars pertaining to FSA's loans to veterans. These can be very helpful in answering inquiries.

Be sure to have that spring house cleaning and dispose of obsolete printed material and posters. New posters should be out before long and we will distribute any good ones available. Attractive office displays of material will interest most farm families.

New employees should have available sufficient FSA pamphlets and other material to give them information about the agency. Supervisors should see that office employees and committeemen have all the information needed about our activities and progress.

* * * * *

COUNTY NEWSLETTERS

Here is a simple, easy-to-follow outline concerning the publication of monthly mimeographed county office newsletters to FSA families. It is designed to aid county offices now using letters as well as those planning to inaugurate them.

Publication of newsletters is governed by USDA policy and regulation. They have a definite place in the program, but they must be properly handled. This over-all outline should answer most of the questions that might arise.

Their Use And Value

Newsletters are important because they save a county office a great deal of time since they reach all FSA families in the county quickly, uniformly and with written information, thus reducing the amount of mail, inquiries and travel for the supervisor.

Even though the war is over, it is still in the national interest to continue certain war-instituted conservation measures. Newsletters will help save mileage, gasoline and tires in addition to your time. They cut down the number of individual letters you must write and thus save time and paper, and they are an effective one-shot method of reaching all FSA families with timely information and requests thus greatly simplifying your job of maintaining an effective, uniform program.

That they can handle some jobs just as efficiently as personal calls has been proven many times on a region-wide basis. This makes them exceedingly valuable during the conversion period when all county offices are faced with the responsibility of doing a more effective job with a greater number of people -- including many who need more than the average amount of supervision.

Newsletter Style

This postal designation, which includes the penalty mark, your return address and the Department of Agriculture permit number, must be prepared in conformity with the outline contained in FSA Instruction 118.3 III A, B and C. Please see that your postal designation follows this instruction.

Newsletters have been recognized as a legitimate means of contacting families as is pointed out in the following quotation from Washington:

"It is permissible to send newsletters to borrowers, giving them information about the program and about their problems, but these letters must not carry any volume and number designation. They must not be marked 'monthly newsletter' or bear any other sign of a periodical. They may be numbered serially and dated, but not as regular issues. Any pictures or illustrations must apply directly to the content of the letter. Pictures cannot be used for decoration."

This means you cannot carry a designation of Vol. 1 No. 1 on your heading; or call your publication "Brown County Monthly Newsletter". You can, however, call it the "Brown County Newsletter" and number the issues serially 1, 2, 3, etc. You can illustrate a milk cooler, but you cannot use a decorative Thanksgiving cover picture.

It is also required that "United States Department of Agriculture" appear in the heading above "Farm Security Administration" and in type as large or larger than "Farm Security Administration".

Important: While they are referred to as monthly newsletters, they should not be issued on the same date each month, but should be issued about every four weeks. However, they may be published oftener if necessary. Hence, you may have issues two or three weeks, and again five weeks apart.

In order to conform to regulations and also to facilitate handling in the state and regional offices, and in Washington, it is essential that the heading be comprehensive. It must show date, number of issue, place of issue and counties covered. For example:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Durango, La Plata County, Colorado

November 11, 1946

No. 2

COUNTY NEWSLETTER

Or this:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Fort Collins, Colo.

November 11, 1946

No. 3

LARIMER COUNTY NEWSLETTER

In case one county office serves several counties:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Boulder, Colo.
Nov. 11, 1946

No. 1

NEWSLETTER FOR BOULDER & GRAND COUNTIES

Use any type of heading that fits your need, but be sure it is complete. Copies of newsletters are routed around in the regional office and are sent to Washington. It is a help to be able to identify one quickly.

Your letter will be more attractive if you use headings for each subject and break up between subjects with dashes, V's or asterisks. Something like this:

YOUR HELP NEEDED
IN FOOD DRIVE

Farmers are urged to etc.....

VVVVVVVVVVVV

Or you can use a one line heading, simply, "Your Help Needed."

Publication

Issuing of a newsletter is the responsibility of the county HM and RR supervisors. It is their job and their chance to show their initiative and ingenuity. Newsletters are not to be censored by a superior, but it is assumed the county staff will not violate policy or rules.

The district supervisors are asked to help you, but they are not to pass judgment on your copy or require you to submit it for checking before publication. This job rests solely with the county office. This policy has been established with the approval of the regional director and the state directors.

While a newsletter is not a newspaper, they have much in common. Both must be legible, interesting and well prepared. Sentences and paragraphs should be short, crisp, informative. Avoid long, rambling sentences and technical words or phrases. And avoid a stilted, formal manner, or a paternal, possessive one.

Above all, do not be officious. Remember the printed word is more positive than the spoken word. So do not write "you must" do so-and-so;" or "you are required" to do this or that. Never refer to FSA families as "borrowers" or "clients" at any time. Call them FSA families or families in the FSA program. Use a straight-forward business style of writing and do not use the first person. This is important. Instead of "I want you to do this" or "I expect you to do that", simply say "we urge you" or "we suggest that you do this."

This is all by way of saying that a plainly but clearly written newsletter about subjects of interest to your farm families will be read and will get results. A carelessly prepared letter that assumes a superior attitude will not be very productive.

It is a good idea to always keep in mind that you must be specific in writing. Give all the facts. For example, if you are calling attention to a meeting of interest to FSA families, tell them the date, time and place and the purpose. Also, if you make a suggestion about a farm practice, be sure it is constructive. For example, it is not enough to suggest that "this is the time to winterize your poultry house." Go a step further and tell how it should be done.

Subject Matter

There is a wide range of subject material for these newsletters. A check of recent issues revealed this partial list: care of livestock, farm safety, office days and hours, pressure cookers, livestock disease prevention, FSA insurance, recipes, production goals, nutrition, increased milk production, vegetable storage, income tax, fall and winter garden care, bull rings, demonstration meetings, farm labor, culling livestock, stackers and bull rakes, co-ops, WF, clothing exchange, record books, egg preservative, school lunches, health associations, production practices, feeding calves, FO.

You can conserve manpower by informing your farm families through the newsletter of changes in hours or office days. And it is proper to report changes in FSA office personnel, because farmers do business with FSA employees and should know of changes.

Use it to promote pet projects by giving an object lesson in the form of a success story.

Use of an FSA housewife's recipe each month is a good practice. The home management supervisor should see that one is available, and the full name of the farmer's wife from whom it was obtained should be used.

It is a good idea to have a few names in each issue. So if a farmer does an unusual job of sheep raising or with some crop, put in a few lines about it and above all, tell how he achieved his good results.

Past experience in other regions has shown some rather positive results from newsletters and has also brought forth a few items to keep in mind.

Briefly, here are some of the things you should or should not do:

PLEASE DON'T:

1. Publish market or weather forecasts, poetry or personal society items. You can mention FSA families by name for some constructive suggestion or farm achievement, in which case

use full name or initials. But do not print the fact that someone went to Denver to visit an aunt.

2. Use color illustrations or any drawing not pertinent to the text. The rules are specific on this point.
3. Make flat statements on important subjects without citing authority. If you mention a regulation or policy say where it came from. If you list a balanced feed ration that is something new, tell whether it is from extension, FSA, etc.
4. Use direct for sale advertising or list commercial products or brand names. Example: You can advise that a cooking demonstration will be held, where and when, but you can't say what flour company sponsors it. It is not permissible to list farm sales or to advertise exchanges or trades.
5. Use Vol. 1, No. 1, or in any other way head your letter to resemble a periodical.
6. Print details of personal matters or financial arrangements which would be embarrassing to the individuals concerned when using "success" stories. In practically all cases, such details have no place in a newsletter story. The same consideration applies, of course, in the case of stories offered for the press.

PLEASE DO:

1. Use proper heading making certain it shows source, date and county or counties.
2. Use both sides of the paper.
3. Have RR and HM supervisor sign.
4. Use full names of all persons mentioned.
5. Number letters serially.
6. Write clearly and simply. Avoid long sentences and paragraphs.
7. Break up your subjects by using V's, dashes or asterisks between.
8. Be certain of your facts and figures. Verify anything you print.
9. Exchange newsletters with other county offices to get new ideas.
10. Send two copies of each letter to: state office, district office, six copies of each issue to the Information Division, Denver.
11. Write the Information Division if you are in doubt about any phase of this.

Conclusion

After reading this you may feel that publishing a newsletter is quite a task. It really isn't. And it is simplified considerably if you familiarize yourself with the rules and proceed on a sound basis.

Have a folder handy into which all members of the staff can put notes, letters, clippings or other material suggesting topics for next month's letter. This will build up your source material for the next issue and will insure nothing being overlooked. It is also a help if one person can be mainly responsible for the publication, including getting the material together, planning the date of issue and checking everything that is to be used.

You may want to use a box or indented paragraph at the head of your first letter advising that: "This is the first issue of a newsletter to FSA families through which we shall endeavor to keep you informed about developments of interest. It will be issued about every four weeks. Your comments are solicited and we will appreciate your suggestions about improving it."

Just keep in mind that to accomplish its purpose the letter must be read. Thus you will want to make it attractive and interesting. Be sure to get a good mimeographing job, to have it signed and to select your subject matter carefully. And keep it going. With each issue the interest will increase.

We have a few newsletters from around the region. If you would like to have one, please write us.

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